

**WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:**

1           1.    A software management system, comprising:  
2                a vendor package template that provides a script to  
3                install, upgrade, and remove at least one software package;  
4                a package importer to receive said at least one  
5                software package, where said package importer creates an X-  
6                package document based on said vendor package template; and  
7                a package agent to receive, deploy and execute said X-  
8                package at a target computer.

1           2.    The software management system of claim 1, wherein  
2                said package importer receives a user identity for  
3                recording.

1           3.    The software management system of claim 1, wherein  
2                said at least one software package includes packages from  
3                different vendors.

1           4.    The software management system of claim 3, wherein  
2                said X-package includes a substantially uniform set of  
3                attributes that allows said at least one software packages  
4                to be managed in a single user interface.

1           5.    The software management system of claim 1, wherein  
2   said package importer tags said X-package with a signature.

1           6.    The software management system of claim 5, further  
2   comprising:

3           an authentication element to provide verification of  
4   the X-package by validating the signature in the X-package  
5   with a list of certificates trusted by the target computer.

1           7.    The software management system of claim 6, further  
2   comprising:

3           a script extractor to extract an X-package script.

1           8.    The software management system of claim 7, wherein  
2   said X-package script includes logic for interacting with a  
3   vendor-specific package agent.

1           9.    The software management system of claim 7, wherein  
2   said X-package script includes logic for interacting with  
3   multiple operating systems.

1           10.   The software management system of claim 1, wherein  
2   said X-package further includes a name of a user who  
3   imported said at least one software package.

1           11. The software management system of claim 1, wherein  
2       said X-package further includes hash of package files  
3       included in said at least one software package.

1           12. The software management system of claim 1, wherein  
2       said package agent checks relevant operating system of said  
3       at least one software package.

1           13. The software management system of claim 1, wherein  
2       said package agent downloads any needed files.

1           14. The software management system of claim 1, wherein  
2       said package agent reports status.

1 15. A software management system, comprising:

2 a distribution management server including:

3 a vendor package template that provides a script  
4 to install, upgrade, and remove at least one software  
5 package; and

6 a package importer to receive said at least one  
7 software package, said package importer creates an X-  
8 package document based on said vendor package template,  
9 where said package importer tags said X-package with a  
10 signature;

11 a plurality of target computers, each target computer  
12 including:

13 an authentication element to provide verification  
14 of the X-package by validating the signature in the X-  
15 package with a list of certificates trusted by the  
16 target computer;

17 a script extractor to extract an X-package script;  
18 and

19 a package agent to receive, deploy and execute  
20 said X-package at the target computer.

1 16. The software management system of claim 15,  
2 wherein said at least one software package includes packages  
3 from different vendors.

1           17. The software management system of claim 16,  
2           wherein said X-package includes a substantially uniform set  
3           of attributes that allows said at least one software  
4           packages to be managed in a single user interface.

1           18. A method for distributing vendor-specific software  
2           to target computers, comprising:

3           importing the vendor-specific software using a vendor  
4           package template to create an X-package having a script;  
5           transferring said X-package to target computers; and  
6           processing said X-package script.

1           19. The method of claim 18, further comprising:  
2           authenticating the X-package by validating a signature  
3           on said X-package.

1           20. The method of claim 18, further comprising:  
2           extracting the script from said X-package for  
3           processing.

1           21. The method of claim 18, wherein said processing  
2           said X-package script includes checking a relevant operating  
3           system of the vendor-specific software.

1           22. The method of claim 18, wherein said processing  
2           said X-package script includes downloading all relevant  
3           files.

1           23. The method of claim 18, wherein said processing  
2           said X-package script includes reporting status.

1           24. An apparatus comprising a machine-readable storage  
2           medium having executable instructions that enable the  
3           machine to:

4           import the vendor-specific software using a vendor  
5           package template to create an X-package having a script;  
6           transfer said X-package to target computers; and  
7           process said X-package script.

1           25. The apparatus of claim 24, further comprising:  
2           authenticate the X-package by validating a signature on  
3           said X-package.

1           26. The apparatus of claim 24, further comprising:  
2           extract the script from said X-package for processing.